Town Meeting Coordinating Committee
Meeting of Tuesday, May 4, 2010
Bangs Community Center, Room 101

Attendance: Peggy Roberts, Nonny Burack (departed 5:51), Rob Crowner, Mary Streeter, Harry Brooks, Carol Gray (arrived 5:10), Aaron Hayden (arrived 5:01, departed 6:07); absent: Dorwenda Bynum-Lewis.

1. Call to order: Peggy calls the meeting to order at 4:55pm.

2. Electronic voting: The committee reviews some of the relevant recent history of Town Meeting decision-making. The red and green tally cards were introduced around 2003 by one of the iterations of the TM study/improvement committees; previously tally cards had been white. A 2005 TMCC survey of Town Meeting showed strong support for the current voting systems and for accountability. Kris Pacunas forwarded an inquiry in Fall 2009 about the possibility of piggybacking on Framingham's investigation of electronic voting. Harry reports that he has been in contact with a vendor for a system including 450 handheld units that would show the user how his or her vote was recorded, costing $22,000 -- maybe less. Aaron has an estimate (not a quote) of $11,000 for a basic system with 260 units. [N.B., Aaron reported after the meeting that he received a quote in the same range as Harry's, but for a different system.] It is noted that batteries would be an ongoing cost that would be affected by how long they would last in the remotes, whether they were readily available, and whether rechargeable or recyclable batteries were selected for purchase.

Harry suggests that the committee define the specifications it desires in an electronic voting system and then find a product that satisfies them, rather than attempt to compare a few existing systems. Aaron states that Town Meeting will have to decide (a) whether it wants electronic voting and (b) whether it will pay for it.

It is noted that the Moderator is already working on this matter, planning a demonstration for TM on Monday, May 17 and writing a bylaw amendment. Carol states that TMCC should, logically, take an active role in the process, such as by surveying TM members and assisting on the crafting of the bylaw. Peggy states that she has communicated a preliminary list of issues that TMCC has identified and requested a meeting with him to work on it together. Aaron observes that the Moderator's interest is likely motivated by a recognition that it would help him perform his duties.

Carol recommends against making a determination about how the system would be used before surveying Town Meeting members for their input. Mary states that Wayland, Massachusetts is considering an electronic system so that voting can be private (in an open town meeting). Nonny opposes the recording of all votes. Aaron points out that votes would be recorded automatically, but they do not have to be published or even saved.

Carol suggests creating a survey to accompany the demonstration, to give people an opportunity to express concerns and describe what they want from an electronic voting system. Peggy states that the survey should also be given to those who don't attend the demonstration. Aaron observes that a survey can be made available on the back table at the beginning of the night of the demonstration and then mailed only to those who did not check in. After deciding against creating a survey subcommittee, the committee commences putting together a survey at this meeting.

Among the issues discussed: When should electronic voting be used (e.g., for every vote, to replace standing votes or tally votes, or for when the moderator is in doubt)? Should the results be published or saved or neither? Would increased accountability or discomfort with technology drive some people away from Town Meeting service? Should there be a hand vote option? How important is it for a user to be able to confirm his or her vote? Should TM consider using electronic voting? The committee agrees to introduce the survey with a few details about electronic voting, such as cost, record-keeping and time-

saving features, etc., and to provide space for respondents to offer other ideas and considerations. Carol will draft a survey based on the ideas discussed and circulate it for review before the next meeting.

The committee discusses proposing an ad hoc committee that would include the Moderator, members of TMCC, and others to meet one or more times before the Fall Town Meeting to work on a bylaw change if necessary, based on the results of the survey.

3. TMCC election: The committee informally discusses the scheduled date of the TMCC election (Monday, May 17) and how it can be most effectively run. It is suggested that ballots be handed out at check-in (rather than at a second check-in) to encourage people to vote.

Mary reports that at least three precincts have indicated a desire for a second precinct meeting. Carol advises against automatically scheduling multiple meetings for individual precincts to avoid dilution of each, but encourages offering a follow-up if desired.

Mary reports that a few new TM members have been matched up with mentors.

4. Info forum evaluation: No action.

5. Bus tour evaluation: No action.

6. Minutes of previous meeting: No action.

7. Adjournment: The meeting is officially adjourned at 6:18 and breaks up at 6:27.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Crowner

Documents distributed at the meeting:
1. agenda
2. draft minutes of meeting of April 23, 2010
3. copies of emails from Harrison Gregg about electronic voting
4. TMCC survey on "accountable voting", including results and comments, conducted in May 2005
5. printouts from State of Vermont website on voting in Town Meeting and Australian ballot
6. *Boston Globe* article on Wayland Town Meeting article on electronic voting
7. transcript of questions about electronic voting from video on <www.electronicvoting.info> website